

Appendix A

A draft Vision for the Somerset Levels and Moors in 2030

We see the Somerset Levels and Moors in 2030 as a thriving, nature-rich wetland landscape, with grassland farming taking place on the majority of the land. The impact of extreme weather events is being reduced by water management in both the upper catchments and the flood plain.

- (a) The landscape remains one of open pasture land divided by a matrix of ditches and rhynes, often bordered by willow trees. Extensively managed wet grassland dominates the scene with the great majority of the area in agriculture in 2010 still being farmed in 2030.
- (b) The floodplains are managed to accommodate winter flooding whilst reducing flood risk elsewhere. These flood events are widely recognised as part of the special character of the Levels and Moors.
- (c) The upper parts of the catchments are managed so as to reduce the speed and volume of surface run-off. All new built development has its own attenuation systems to ensure that it does not add to flooding problems downstream.
- (d) A long-term, affordable and sustainable management regime for the tidal sections of the Rivers Parrett and Tone has been adopted. This management regime, alongside changes in the management of the upper catchment and the greater use of the gravity floodplain, has reduced the frequency and duration of severe flooding on Curry and Hay Moors, and upstream of Langport. As a consequence, the risk of homes, businesses and major roads being flooded has been greatly reduced.
- (e) During the summer months there is an adequate supply and circulation of high quality irrigation water to meet the needs of the farmers and wildlife in the wetlands. On the low-lying peat moors, water levels have been adopted which conserve peat soils and avoid the loss of carbon to the atmosphere.
- (f) The Levels and Moors are regarded as one of the great natural spectacles in the UK and Europe with a mix of diverse and valuable habitats. Previously fragmented habitats such as fen and flower-rich meadows have been re-connected and are widely distributed. In the north of the area over 1,600 ha are managed as reed-bed and open water. Elsewhere the populations of breeding waders exceed 800 pairs. Each winter the wetlands attract large numbers of wintering wildfowl and waders regularly exceeding 130,000 birds. Wetland species such as Crane, Bittern and bumblebee populations flourish.
- (g) Businesses based on 'green tourism' have developed, meeting the needs of local people and visitors alike, while brands based on the area's special qualities are helping farmers to add value to the meat and milk they produce.
- (h) Farmers and landowners are rewarded financially for the public benefits and ecosystem services they provide by their land management including flood risk management, coastal management, carbon storage and the natural environment.

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